

Evaluating the need for a Acting Fire Officer Developing Program in the Westminster Fire

Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I herby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expression, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

Organizations have the obligation to create consistent and measureable performance steps for Acting Fire Officers. The problem is the Westminster Fire Department has not identified the knowledge, skills, abilities, and others of an Acting Fire Officer. The purpose is to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and others of an Acting Fire Officer for the Westminster Fire Department. The descriptive research method was conducted and four research questions were identified:

1. What do current Acting Fire Lieutenants think that they need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others?
2. What do Fire Lieutenants think the Acting Fire Lieutenant need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others?
3. What do Fire Captains think the Acting Fire Lieutenant need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others?
4. What do Battalion Chiefs think the Acting Fire Lieutenant need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others?

The procedures utilized include literature review, questionnaires and interviews. Extensive research was conducted accessing the Internet, books, Executive Fire Officer papers, and recent articles. Questionnaires were designed and developed and sent to Westminster Fire Department personnel. In addition, interviews were conducted with chief level officers from the Westminster Fire Department.

The results from the research questionnaires and interview clearly pointed in the direction of developing an Acting Fire Officer Program. Recommendations were addressed based on the results of the questionnaires and interviews to implement an Acting Fire Officer Program.

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Introduction

Throughout the United States, the fire service believes in developing strong leaders for the success of each organization. These future leaders are trained and educated in several different ways based on the requirement's within their own organization. One of the most crucial elements is preparing our future leaders for the role of a fire officer. The first level supervisor has a significant impact on the success of subordinates and the community they serve. Numerous fire departments have fallen short in setting the standard for preparing their acting fire officers to fill the roles of their supervisors when they are absent.

The problem is the Westminster Fire Department has not identified the knowledge, skills, abilities, and others of an Acting Fire Officers (AFO's). The first line supervisor within the organization plays a key role in his or her development of success, including the crews that report directly to the officer, and the citizens /community they serve. Some firefighters complete an officer development academy and others are trained by their officers and state they are ready to start acting in the position. This creates inconsistencies across the department. The AFO's are held accountable for the position with minimal consistent training requirements across all shifts. The acting officer is given the authority to gain experience by filling the seat when their supervisor is absent.

The Westminster Fire Department does an excellent job of preparing the AFO's for a promotional test. However, are we giving these folks the best opportunity to be successful as an AFO? The purpose of this Applied Research Project (ARP) is to evaluate and determine the knowledge, skills, abilities and others of an Acting Fire officer Program.

The purpose of the descriptive research method is to answer the following questions: 1) What do current Acting Fire Lieutenants think they need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others? 2) What do Lieutenants think the Acting Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others? 3) What do Captains think the Acting Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others? 4) What do Battalion Chiefs think the Acting Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others?

Background and Significance

The City of Westminster is a suburban community just northwest of Denver. It is bounded by two of the state's busiest corridors I-25 and U.S. 36. Westminster offers numerous recreation activities, draws tech business opportunity, has excellent schools, and creates a lifestyle of diversity of mixed-use neighborhoods. The city's population is 107,967 covering 35 square miles with over 3000 businesses and the median age of 35.4 ("CO Connects," 2013). The city has several business opportunities from small mom and pop shops and light industrial businesses located in the southern end of the city, also known as the future Art district. As you proceed to the northern end of the city, the residential dwellings create an abundance of shopping opportunity, golfing, state of the art hotels, and new taxpayer structures designed for the sophisticated lifestyle. The city has two level 3 hospitals. Most recently the city has been working with a developer to create and design a future lower downtown residential / business district. Current plans are to develop a mix-use of state of the art hotels, retail businesses and residential living. In addition, the Regional Transportation District is building a FasTrack system that will run from downtown Denver through the southern district of Westminster and eventually to the new lower downtown Westminster area.

The Westminster Fire Department was founded in 1934 and began as a one station volunteer fire department. Over the course of several years the volunteered firefighters increase their membership to over 25 by the late 1940's. In 1960 the second fire station was opened.

As the years progressed, the city began to increase in size and population. The first firefighter was hired in the 1970's and additional firehouses were added. The fire department increased in size of paid- combination firefighters. By the mid to late 1980's WFD added three additional fire stations. In the early to mid 1990's WFD's vision of providing medical transport to the citizens was a significant priority. By the early year of 2000 WFD volunteer firefighters officially ended.

Currently WFD has 135 personnel, of those, 117 personnel are online career firefighters that are split between three shifts; working a 24 hours Berkley system that equates to a 56-hour work week. The city has strategically distinguished six districts that house one fire station in each of these districts. The Westminster Fire Department responds to over 9,000 calls a year. About 70 percent of these calls are medical calls. The remainder of calls includes response to fires, alarms, hazardous materials, rescues (water, technical, etc.) and public assists. Response time is typically under five minutes (www.ci.westminster.co.us). WFD provides ALS/BLS medical transport, fire protection, hazardous material, technical rescue, water rescue, fire investigation, and all other response from residences and businesses. WFD provides several special teams such as the, Juvenile Fire Setters Team, USAR Team, Wild Land team, Tech Rescue Team, Hazmat Team, Dive Team, Fire Investigator On-line Team, Honor Guard Team, and Shift PIO Team. Of the six stations, firefighters staff seven pieces of apparatus and five medic units that include two 105' aerial apparatus and five engine companies. When the apparatus or medic units need service WFD has two-reserve engines, one reserve 75' aerial and

two reserve medic units. Each shift has one Battalion Chief, two station Captains, five Lieutenants, seven Engineers, nine Paramedics, and fifteen firefighters. All station have a minimum of three personal assigned to each piece of apparatus and a minimum of one medic and one firefighter are assigned to the medic unit.

When staffing permits, personnel will be assigned to the apparatus as a fourth firefighter. WFD provides reciprocal mutual aid with several surrounding fire departments.

The remaining seventeen personnel serve in administrative positions. These positions include, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Deputy of Operations Chief, EMS Chief, two EMS Field Lieutenant Coordinators, Training Captain, Field Training Lieutenant, Fire Marshal, Lieutenant Plans Examiner, Lieutenant Fire Investigator/Inspector, public educator, Captain of Emergency Management, and administrative secretary support.

WFD has always been competitive and believes in the importance of a true learning organization. In 2002 WFD adopted the Professional Development Guidelines (PDG's). Theses guidelines allow an organization to create a balance of professional experience and education. In order to test for a position above the individual's current rank, one must meet the minimum requirements.

The current PDG's for Fire Lieutenant are as follow:

- Associate Degree or 60 college credit hours towards a Bachelor Degree
- EMT-B or EMT-P and ACLS Certifications
- Firefighter II Certification
- Haz-Mat operations level
- ICS 300
- Instructor Methodology Course

- IFC Inspector I Certification
- Incident Safety Officer Course
- Proficiency utilizing software and computer equipment relevant to the position
- Minimum of tow years experience as Paramedic / Engineer with cumulative fire service of five years or cumulative fire service experience of 9 years at the fire fighter level.

Once the individual has met the minimum requirements, he or she can test for the position of Fire Lieutenant when it becomes available. If they do not promote to the position, the individual is typically placed on an unranked one-year promotional list.

The WFD has offered three officer development programs for aspiring Fire Lieutenants over the past six years. However, it is not a requirement to complete the WFD officer development program in order to promote to the rank of Fire Lieutenant or to become an acting fire officer. Currently there are no written minimum requirements or documentation for one to become an acting fire officer. The ultimate responsibility is at the discretion of the shift Battalion Chief. If the Battalion Chief does not agree with the request for that individual to be placed in the seat as an acting officer, he can deny the request. Additional support from the Fire Lieutenants and Captains is emphasized to prepare our personnel for advancement within the organization. There are approximately 27 personal that have been given the opportunity to act as an officer. Approximately 66% have met the current PDG's of a Fire Lieutenant for future testing. The remaining individuals have been coached, mentored and trained at different degrees of expectations based on the officer's input and approval from the Battalion Chief.

Fire personnel would like consistency when determining the requirements for an acting officer position. Personnel believe this is a problem due to inconsistency of training and development. Over the past few years there has been an increase in promotional opportunity. This increase has sparked the importance of creating an acting officer development program.

The reason behind the research of an acting officer program is to determine the need for consistent requirements that will benefit the citizens and community, organization and personnel.

This document relates specifically to the Executive Development course of the Executive Fire Officer Program. The scope of the research is focused on developing effective management and leadership skills, enhance team development, and create change when necessary through organizational culture and service quality. In addition, this paper directly relates to the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) strategic plan goals number four. This goal is to improve the fire and emergency services' professional status (p.13), the objective of which is to "advocate the competency-based approach to professional development that includes training, higher education, and professional designations" ("USFA Strategic Plan," 2010, p. 21). The Westminster Fire Department's organizational values of integrity and accountability/responsibility fall in line with the organizational values of the USFA's Strategic Plan. These values drive decisions, performance and commitment to providing a learning organization for all personnel.

Literature Review

The crucial components in developing and preparing future leaders in today's organizations are more compelling then ever. Research in knowledge, skills, abilities, and others for the acting officer position were conducted in the literature review. The preparation of the literature review was researched through previous Executive Fire Officer's Applied Research

Proposals (ARP's), online articles, books, and manuals. The fire service has changed dramatically over the past several years. The public's perception of the fire service has changed and justification of being accountable for each position is more vital then ever before. Several of the ARP's noted similar comparisons and the need to develop an acting officer program. According to Jesse Thomas "Being prepared has always been the mantra of the fire service, and as a company officer, you want to be confident that your personnel are prepared" (Thompson, 2013, para. 13). There are several different opinions of precise knowledge, skills and abilities to prepare for an acting officer program.

The officer's leadership and management skills will magnify and enhance his tactical abilities as well as serve to establish and maintain a productive and professional atmosphere around the firehouse (Salka, 2009). One of the most difficult transitions in the fire service is going from one of the crewmembers to the role of an officer. Knowledge is essential for the success and development of the acting officer. Information that is learned through education, standard operation guidelines, city policies and rules, and past experiences is crucial to creating a broader understanding of the responsibilities of an acting officer. In Fire Engineering website, Lowe & Bolton (2002) points out the important of future officers developing knowledge in several areas:

It takes planning, reflection, commitment, communication skills, and tenacity for officers to develop the prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure their policies and operation practices generate more positive returns than negative consequences.

Developing the skills early in ones career will pay huge dividends when preparing and competing in a promotional opportunity (Lowe & Bolton, 2002, para. 23).

Future officers are faced with high competition and obtaining a college degree will give them a competitive edge when it comes to advancing their career. According to Markley “the skills learned from both the classes and the processes of completing a degree are very useful to company officers. A degree program will offer more hours of such topics as fire behavior as well as soft skills like administration and management” (Markely, 2014, para. 14). Future officers should obtain all the necessary training and experience in order to prepare themselves for success. The organization has an obligation to provide the proper classroom education to its officers before they are fronted to apply their decision-making process (Sargent, 2006, para. 6). Others discussed the importance of providing skills necessary in the education of leadership and management skills. According to Craig Shelly “strategies and tactics cannot exist without effective leadership, officer development must include both for mission success”(Shelly, 2009, para. 22).

When determining appropriate knowledge one must look at an individual’s natural abilities. These natural abilities tie to personal traits. According to Barakey (2013), It is unrealistic to expect people to lead who have not prepared. By understanding effective traits such as preparation, wisdom and effect, an organization can prepare its personnel for success and create effective leaders. He also points out the importance of training and education alone does not provide for wisdom but providing mentorship is the key to sharing the wisdom and allowing for proper decisions to be made (Barakey, 2013, para. 9).

Determining the skills needed for an acting officer can trigger many different components of interest. As we advance into the world of technology and the age of the Internet, the fire service must also advance to meet the demands of society. These interests will force the hands of leaders to focus efforts on skills that will create productive future officers. As Willing (2013)

notes, communication skills are imperative in order to resolve conflict resolution or delivering the difficult conversations (Willing, 2013, para. 10). In addition, Willing states, “ the prevalence of virtual communication has led to some people never developing real skills in face-to-face communication” (Willing, 2013, para. 11). Educational opportunities are imperative in today’s society. The bar is being set for the justification of entry fire personnel and advancement within the organization. In the article “Why every fire officer should have an advanced degree” it is implied that future officer must understand the complexity of the organization and a higher education will make you a stronger leader, and many of the degree programs result in research projects that can be utilized towards their department (Harmes, 2008, para 23). Education is a basis of a person’s potential, but practical experience and skills are vital as well and no one can do it by themselves (Harmes, 2008, para. 23). The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management have created a current courses in providing fire service officers with the skills and knowledge necessary to allow individuals to fulfill leadership, command, training and officer-ship roles assigned to them.

The course curriculum and objectives includes the following:

- Roles of Station Officer
 - Responsibilities
 - Leadership and officer-ship
 - Personnel management
- Command and Control at various incident types (through the use of the national Incident Command System)
- Station Management
- Fire-fighting Tactics

- Methods of instruction
 - Facts and skills instruction
 - Drill instruction
 - Exercise preparation
- Fire Investigations & Court Appearances
- Pre-Fire Planning
- Major Emergencies

This course will allow the understanding of responsibilities of a Fire Service Officer, leadership concepts, enhanced ability to exercise command and control, and prepare and delivery of training

(<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/NationalDirectorateforFireandEmergencyManagement/FireServiceTraining/>). The Rincon Valley Fire District (RVFD) has defined their education and skills needed for future officers through a Position Task Book.

These skills and education include the following seven areas:

- Human Resource Management
- Community and Government Relations
- Inspection and Investigation
- Emergency Service Delivery
- Safety
- Facility Management
- Education and Certification Requirements

(RVFD, 2013).

Once the individual successfully completes the task book they are eligible for assignments or eligible to test for an officer position when available (J. Bisnar, personnel communication, June 8th, 2014).

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has specific standards under NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. There are four different levels of advancement at which Job Performance Requirement (JPR's) are incorporated. The levels range from Fire Officer Level 1 (first level supervisor) through Fire Officer Level IV. Fire Officer Level 1 is specific to the following areas of focus:

- 4.1 General
- 4.2 Human resources
- 4.3 Community and Government Relations
- 4.4 Administration
- 4.5 Inspection and Investigations
- 4.6 Emergency Service Delivery
- 4.7 Health and Safety

("Standard for fire officer professional qualifications," 2014, Chapter 4).

NFPA has established these specific areas of requirements to follow in order to create an opportunity of effective fire officers for the future generation ("NFPA 1021," 2014).

Fire officer development opportunities have been thoroughly researched by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and correspond to the NFPA 1021 - Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications in which the Officer Development Handbook has been published. This handbook has been designed to assist in developing future fire leaders from Supervising Fire Officer I through Executive Fire Officer IV. The handbook is broken down into

four critical areas for each level of advancement: education, training, experience, and self-development. The supervising foundation of these four levels starts with the most crucial components of education and training. These two areas will create the basis for building a strong foundation of a future officer. The areas of focus for the education level are tied to accredited institutions of higher education. The training level focuses on elements of Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Fire Officer I, Incident Safety Officer, IMS, Instructor I, Emergency Medical Services, Valid Drivers License, and HazMat Operation Level. Experience is vital in maintaining basic skills and development of critical experienced skills such as minimum 3- 5 years of qualified service, coaching, directing resources, planning, human resource management, financial resource management, project management, emergency management, community involvement, and professional associations. The last component is self-development. This area is designed to determine where one's ability of self-development currently is positioned and if you are prepared to take the reigns of the supervisory fire officer role. The handbook has ten elements of self-development: health/fitness, physical ability, communication, interpersonal dynamics/skills, diversity, ethics, legal issues, technology, and local or unique hazard issues.

The IAFC Officer Development Handbook provides an opportunity of professional development, and a guide to increasing the learning experience for each individual and not merely to obtain a certificate (, 2010).

In the book *Leading with Honor*, the author Lee Ellis discusses the importance of developing your people. Successful organizations from around the world discuss the benefit of practicing skills, coaching, regular critiques, and continuous development. If these types of other skills are not incorporated into continuous development, the future leaders will spend more time performing and less time practicing (Ellis, 2012).

In summary, the research method completed to influence the literature review supports and identifies the research questions in this ARP. The development of an Acting Officer Program through this review can give one an understanding of the organizational benefits of success for the outcome of the citizens and community served. In addition, the research performed paints a clear picture of the foundation that addresses the successful opportunities of personnel's advancement, accountability, and responsibility within an organization. The former commander of the USS Benfold stated, "As I saw it, my job was to create the climate that enabled people to unleash their potential. Given the right environment, there are few limits to what people can achieve" (Abrashoff, 2002, p. 31).

Procedures

This applied research project problem was identified and questions using the descriptive method of research were utilized. The project questions were created to develop accurate, direct and some open-ended questions to gain further insight for the Acting Officer Program. This study utilized the results of four research questions as follows: 1. What do current Acting Fire Lieutenants think they need in terms of knowledge, skill, abilities, and others? 2. What do Fire Lieutenants think the Acting Fire Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skill, abilities, and others? 3. What do Captains think the Acting Fire Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skill, abilities, and others? 4. What do Battalion Chiefs think the Acting Fire Lieutenants need in terms of knowledge, skill, abilities, and others?

This research started prior to the author attending the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program, Executive Development Course. Several discussions with Acting Fire Lieutenants, Fire Lieutenants, Fire Captains, and Battalion Chiefs were generated in order to observe the personnel's thought process and general perceptions for this development program.

Once the author arrived at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, extensive research was completed at the learning resource center. The research consisted of reading several applied research papers. These research papers gave the author supporting evidence and similar problems that were determined in this research paper. In addition, this author reviewed journals and books related to the research questions from the fire service arena. Leading words such as ‘acting officer program’, “ fire officers knowledge”, “leadership”, “mentorship”, and “government advancement” were used to find additional information for this topic.

Other research conducted away from the National Fire Academy and related to this research project incorporated the use of personal Internet access of successful corporations and the leadership skills of the military. Additional books and journals from the Westminster Fire Department’s training library and the Denver Public Library were applied.

The four research questionnaires are tailored to each rank of the Westminster Fire Department starting with Acting Fire Lieutenant, Fire Lieutenant, and Fire Captain. An email was sent out to each rank requesting participation of a questionnaire survey via the Internet site, Survey Monkey (Appendix A, C, E). In addition, the Battalion Chiefs were sent an email by the author requesting their participation in a one-on-one interview (Appendix G).

These research questions started with the current Acting Fire Lieutenants (Appendix B). A total of twenty-seven Acting Fire Lieutenant personnel received the survey. Eight questions of this project asked what do current Acting Fire Lieutenants think they need in terms of knowledge, skill, abilities, and others (KSAOs); the reason behind these questions is to identify what the Acting Fire Lieutenants think they need in terms of KSAOs. The second survey was tailored to the Fire Lieutenant (Appendix D). A total of fourteen Fire Lieutenants received the survey; the reason behind the Fire Lieutenants completing the eleven question survey is to

identify what KSAOs are needed at an Acting Fire Lieutenants position. The third survey was designed for the Fire Captain (Appendix F). A total of seven Captains received the survey; the reason behind the Fire Captain completing the eleven question survey is to identify what KSAOs are needed at an Acting Fire Lieutenants position from a supervisor / management level perspective.

The forth research questionnaire was designed to interview the Battalion Chief rank (Appendix H). A total of three Battalion Chiefs were interviewed and ask four question that identify the KSAOs of an Acting Fire Lieutenant from a management level perspective.

A total of 51 personnel of the Westminster Fire Department participated in the survey and interview questions. This is a 100% response rate from the request of the author to participate in the questionnaire and interview questions.

The limitation to this author's research is based on current AFO's and above ranks. The focus of current AFO's and above ranks may have limited the response versus gaining additional insight from below the rank of AFO's. In addition, certain factors may be identified for the need of an Acting Fire Officer Program. Additional research focused on implementing an Acting Fire Officer program will need to be conducted.

Results

A total of four survey questionnaires were prepared for this applied research project. The results from the research questions created a consistent detailed pattern in order to identify and evaluate the need for an Acting Fire Officer Development Program. The specific research questions with results and detailed information is located in Appendix I - Acting Fire Lieutenants, J – Fire Lieutenants, K – Fire Captains. The Battalion Chiefs interview questions

with answers follow in this section. The following research questions were completed utilizing Survey Monkey:

Research question 1 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain). How long have you been employed with the Westminster Fire Department?

The results illustrate the average years of an AFO is between 6-15 years, the average years for a Fire Lieutenant is 11-20 years. At the Captain level the average years is 21-25 years. As discussed in the literature review, a minimum of 3-5 years of experience, education, and other pertinent learning experiences is vital to the success of an AFO and future officer. *Research question 2 (AFO's). How long have you been an Acting Fire Officer for the Westminster Fire Department?*

The majority of the AFO's is between 1-5 years equating to 40.74%, the second highest level is 6-10 years at 37.04%. The Fire Lieutenants and Fire Captains were asked the similar question at their current rank. The Fire Lieutenants' answers were similar to those of the AFO. The highest percentage was 42.86% at 1-5 years in the position. The second highest is 35.71% at 6-10 years in the position. The Fire Captain's highest percentage totaled 43.86% with 21-25 years in the position.

Research question 3 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain). Is there a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program?

The AFO's response of "yes" totaled 85.19%. The Fire Lieutenants responded, "yes" with a 100% and 85.71% from the Fire Captains were in favor. A separate question was asked of the Fire Lieutenants and Fire Captains if they answered yes to question 3. The question states, *"If question 3 is answered 'yes' choose the following answers to why it is important for an Acting Officer Development Program?"* The majority of the Fire Lieutenant's and Fire Captain's

answer choice is all of the above. The results of this separate question related specifically to the literature review NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

Research question 4 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain). What do you feel should be the minimum requirements for an Acting Fire Officer based on the following options?

Research was conducted through literature review of WFD's current professional development guidelines of Fire Lieutenant, officer development academy's, on the job training, years of service, and documented evaluation of critical task / administrative forms. The majority of the AFO's results were focused in three categories; attending an officer development academy 40.74%, on the job training 55.56%, and years of service 44.44%. The Fire Lieutenant's majority resulted in 4 areas; on the job training 57.14%, attending an officer development academy 50%, years of service 28.57%, and documented evaluation of critical task / administrative forms 28.57%. The Fire Captain's majority results were three areas: on the job training 57.14%, attending an officer development academy 42.86%, and all of the above answer choice 42.86%. *Research question 5 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain). Do you feel a Task Book consisting of job specific check off sheets would benefit the Acting Fire Officer?*

70% of the AFO's answered yes. The Fire Lieutenants responded with 64.26% yes, and 35.71% answer choice of maybe. The Fire Captains responded with 71.43% yes, and 28.57% answer choice of maybe.

Supported criteria of a Task Book was completed in the literature review by Rincon Valley Fire District (RVFD), and extensive research has been conducted by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and correspond to the NFPA 1021 - Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

Research question 6 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenants, Fire Captains). Who do you feel should sign off and approve a Task Book for the Acting Fire Officer?

The majority of AFO's results focused on two areas: direct supervision 66.67% and Battalion Chiefs 44.44%. The Fire Lieutenants majority resulted in similar answer choice responses, direct supervisor 71.43% and Battalion Chief 64.29%. The Fire Captains responded with 71.43% Battalion Chief and 71.43% direct supervisor. An additional research question was tailored to the Fire Lieutenants and Fire Captains. The question states, *From the options below, choose the most important elements that could be assigned in an Acting Officer task book?* The answer choices are: safety, administrative duties/policies and procedures/SOG's, mentorship-time in front seat, fire inspections, community involvement/city relations, and professional development requirements. The Fire Lieutenants top three results: mentorship-time in front seat 92.86%, safe and administrative duties/policies and procedures/SOG's 85.71%, and safety 71.43%. The Fire Captains top three results: administrative duties/policies and procedures/SOG's 71.43%, and mentorship-time in front seat 42.86%.

Research question 7 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenants, Fire Captains). What are the four most important factors to you in an Acting Officers Development Program?

The eight answer choices are: leadership/city philosophy, emergency service delivery content- ICS strategies and tactics, human resource management, hands-on training, interpersonal communications, community involvement, fire protection systems, and basic hydraulic principles.

The AFO's top three results were emergency service delivery content –ICS strategies and tactics at 96.30%, hands-on training 92.59%, and human resource management at 62.96%. The Fire Lieutenant's top three results were emergency service delivery content –ICS strategies and tactics at 92.86%, hands-on training 85.71%, and human resource management 71.43%. The Fire Captain's top three results were emergency service delivery content –ICS strategies and tactics at 100%, human resource management and hands-on training at 71.43%.

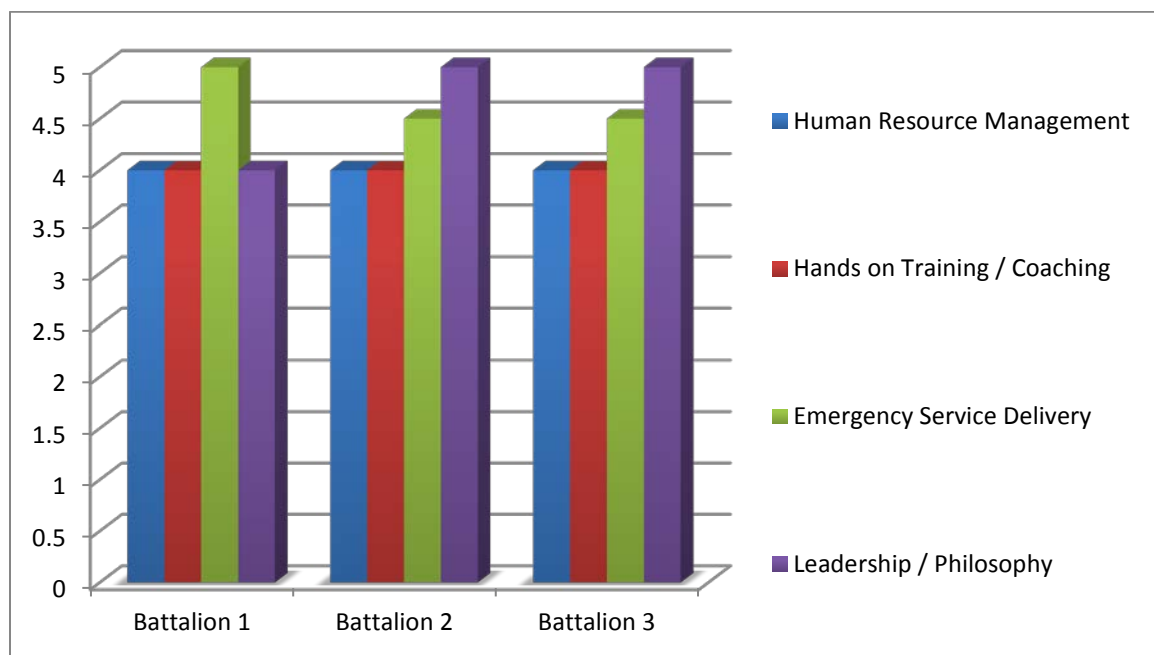
Research question 8 (AFO's, Fire Lieutenants, Fire Captains). In your opinion, would an Acting Fire Officer Development Program increase the knowledge, skills, and personnel abilities, for their success and the organizations success?

The AFO's answer choice "yes" favored 85.19%. The answer choice of "yes" for Fire Lieutenants and Captains is 100%.

Three interviews were conducted with WFD Battalion Chiefs. Each interview was completed separately and five identical research questions were asked. Theses five research questions are: 1. Do you feel there is a need for an Acting Officer Program? 2. If you believe there should be an Acting Officer Program, who should manage the program? 3. Of the following four choices on a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being the highest score, rank in order the most important choices for an Acting Officer Program: human resource management, hands-on training / coaching, emergency service delivery, leadership / philosophy. 4. Would a task book consisting of job specific check off sheets benefit the Acting Fire Officer? 5. In your opinion, would an Acting Fire Officer Development Program increase the knowledge, skills, and personnel abilities, for their success and the organizations success? All three of the Battalion Chiefs agreed with questions 1 and all replied the supervisor should manage the program with guidance of the Battalion Chief for question 2.

The Battalion Chief's response to research question 3 is represented in the following chart.

Chart – Question 3 Interview Battalion Chiefs



The final research questions 4 and 5 of the interview process were discussed and the results reflected a “yes” response from the three Battalion Chiefs.

In Summary, based on the questions provided by the author, the overall results of the 51 WFD personnel who completed the research questions and interview process have identified the need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program and the results clearly define the KSAO's for an Acting Fire Officer Program.

Discussion

Evaluating the need to provide an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program is crucial for the success of the individual, community and organization. Westminster Fire Department's culture is tailored to a learning organization. Setting the standard for an Officer Development Program will enhance this learning organization.

This research project provided information between the specific findings in the literature review and the results identified several factors supporting the research.

Leadership is crucial in developing successful officers as discussed by Salka, “ you set the standards for your people, so to encourage leadership in others, you need to consistently model the kinds of values and attitudes you want your people to adopt”(Salka, 2004, p. 29). WFD prides itself on effective leadership and holds their personnel accountable in all positions filled. The importance of consistency in developing AFO’s across all shifts will create uniformity and accountability. The IAFC completed extensive research for the Officer Development Handbook, which correlates to the NFPA 1021 - Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications in four areas: education, training, experience, and self-development (, 2010). These areas have proven to be an important part of developing effective officers. The similarities are noted by the results from the ranks of AFO’s, Fire Lieutenants, and Fire Captains. Each of the rank’s results in the research questions and interviews correlated in a positive response amongst all.

An area of additional discussion relates to hands-on training. Input will need to be provided of what this entails. From different levels of the organization one must consider training of accurate documentation of personnel issues, incident reports, workers comp form, what to look for when reviewing medical reports, fire inspection reports, preplans, etc. Requests from personnel have stated hands-on training can allow future and current AFO’s to ride the front seat while the officer coaches and mentors from the back seat. Prior to riding in the front seat as an AFO, consideration of minimum written requirements and time in the seat will need to be looked at for consistency across all shifts. This opportunity of riding in the front seat enables the officer to actually see what is occurring during an incident and other daily activities such as

training, public events, coaching others, and addressing personnel issues. This opportunity allows the officer to give additional guidance, constructive criticism, and paints a vivid picture of the AFO's performance.

The overall research questionnaires from the AFO's, Fire Lieutenants, Fire Captains, and Battalion Chiefs recognized the increase knowledge of KSAO's for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program.

Additional information found personnel would like to have more hands-on training that involves mentorship by their direct supervisor. The Fire Lieutenant rank stressed the importance of delivering consistencies of responsibilities for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program, these consistencies tie into the City of Westminster Fire Department's core beliefs of PRIDE- Performance, Responsibility, Innovation, Dedication, and Enthusiasm (<http://www.ci.westminster.co.us/Safety/FireDepartment/AboutUs.aspx>). According to Seidel, "we must define the path for officer development, build the organizational culture, align all of our resources to do the right things in the right way-that is, become certified and qualified" (Seidel, 2009, para. 12).

Although the results lean towards the need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program, the implementation and management of the program will need to be designed to meet the needs of the organization and consideration for the current AFO's. In addition, change in written documentation through policy, procedures, and standard operation guidelines will need clarification.

Recommendations

The purpose of this research project is to determine if there is a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program for the Westminster Fire Department. The results from this

research clearly points in the direction for a need to develop an Acting Fire Officer Program. Of the 51 personnel that completed the questionnaire and interview process, 98% agree an Acting Fire Officer Development Program would increase the KSAO's and personnel abilities for the individual's success and the organization's. This development program will require collaborative efforts from several departments within the organization.

Due to limited funds and resources, the Westminster Fire Department will need to utilize current personnel.

The recommendation by the author is to have the Westminster Fire Department Training Division take the lead on the Acting Fire Officer Developing Program.

Direct assignments, input and support from the Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, and Fire Lieutenant ranks will assist in the evolution of the process. Considerations for the KSAO's based on the questionnaire results, interviews, and literature review will assist in determining the specific elements that need to be included in the Acting Officer Developing Program.

This research project applies to organizations that do not have an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program. Individual organizations have their own methods of advancing their personnel through the ranks. Each organization can conduct an internal assessment to determine their KSAO's. Once the KSAO's have been identified, the organization can assess a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program. The increased demand for professional education, training, skills and experience is vital for each organization's success. We have the duty and responsibility to hold personnel accountable for their safety, the citizen's safety and the communities they serve.

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<http://www.firerecruit.com/articles/1640142-6-challenges-fire-officers-face-in-2014-and-their-solutions>

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Applied Research Program - EFOP, NFA

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program, I am working towards completion of an applied research project titled “Evaluating the Need For a Acting Fire Officer Developing Program”. I am asking all acting fire officers to complete eight multiple-choice questions. Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. My intent is to gather only the results of the questions.

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message. I would appreciate if you could complete the questions by May 29th, 2014.

I appreciate your participation, if you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact me.

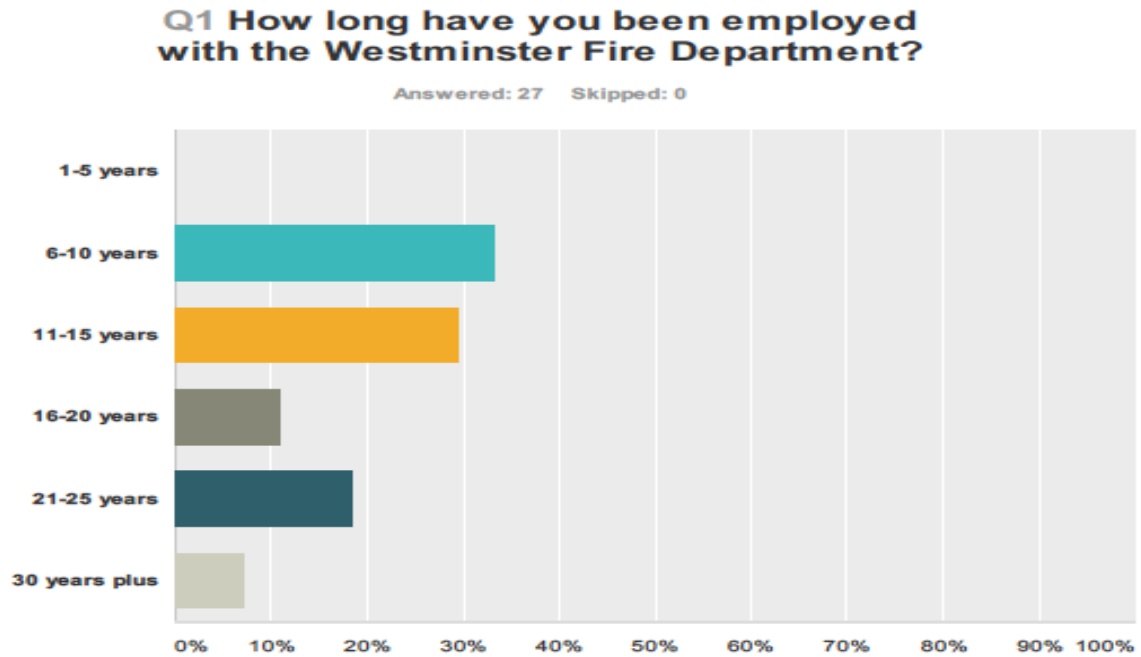
David Varney

Battalion Chief

Westminster Fire Department

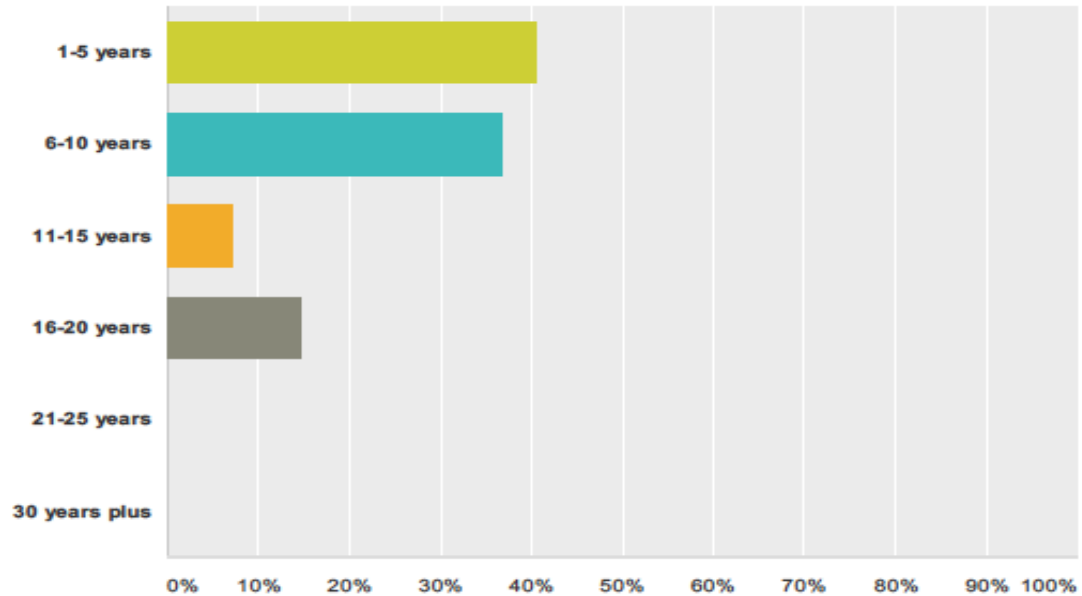
Appendix B

Results from the Acting Fire Lieutenant Questionnaire of the Westminster Fire Department via Monkey Survey



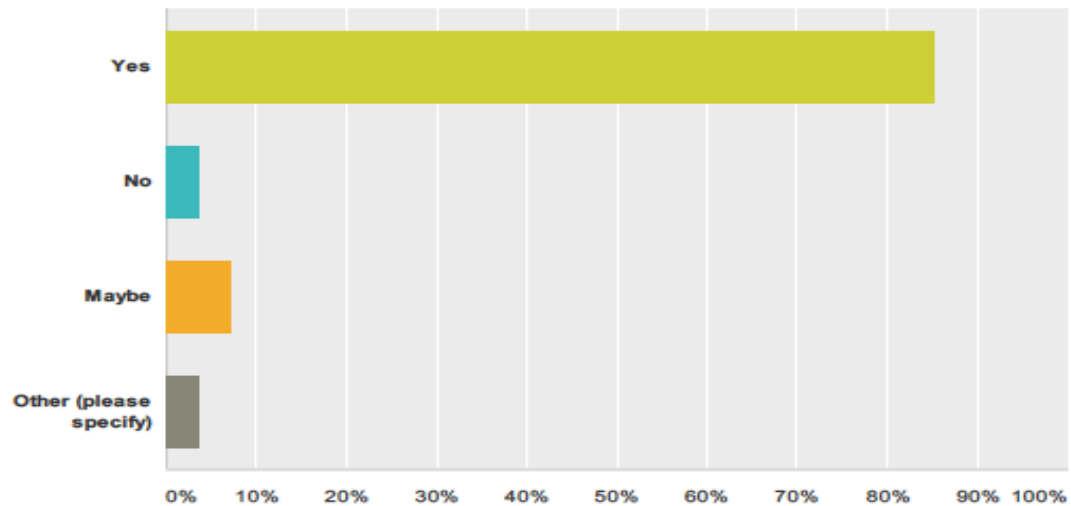
Q2 How long have you been an Acting Fire Officer for the Westminster Fire Department?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



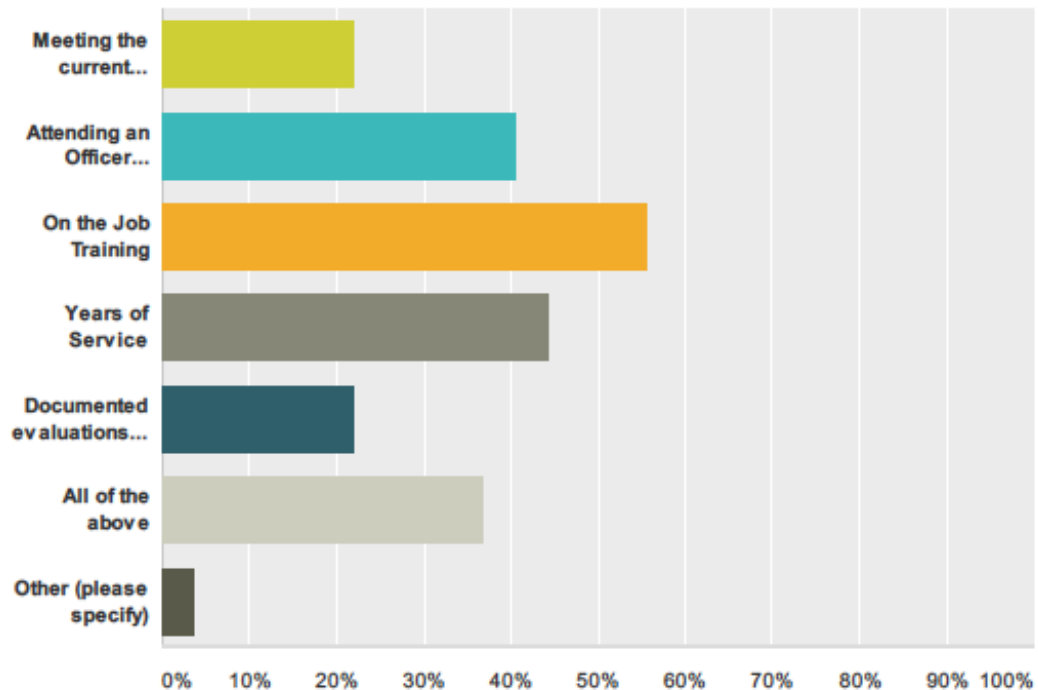
Q3 Is there a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



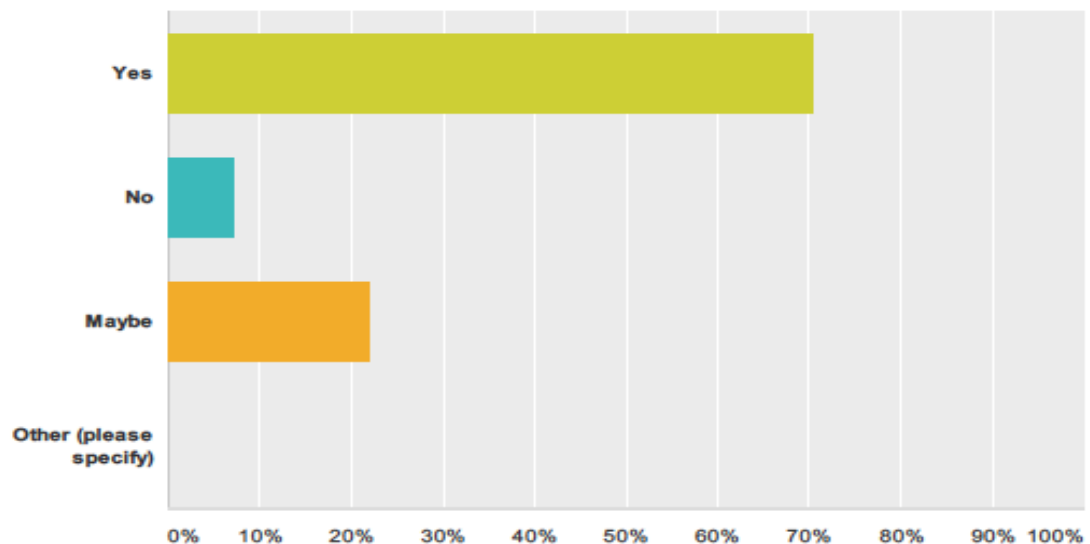
Q4 What do you feel should be the minimum requirements for an Acting Fire Officer based on the following options?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



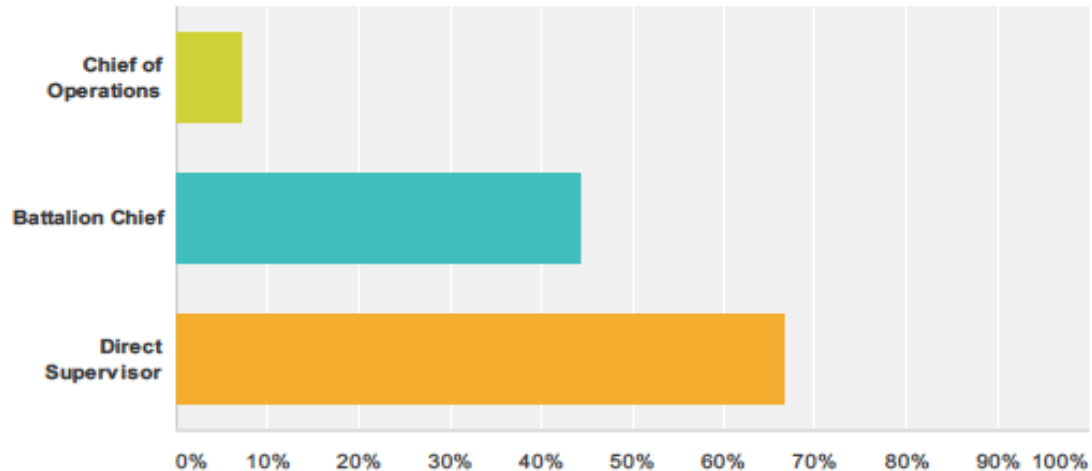
Q5 Do you feel a Task Book consisting of job specific check off sheets would benefit the Acting Fire Officer?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



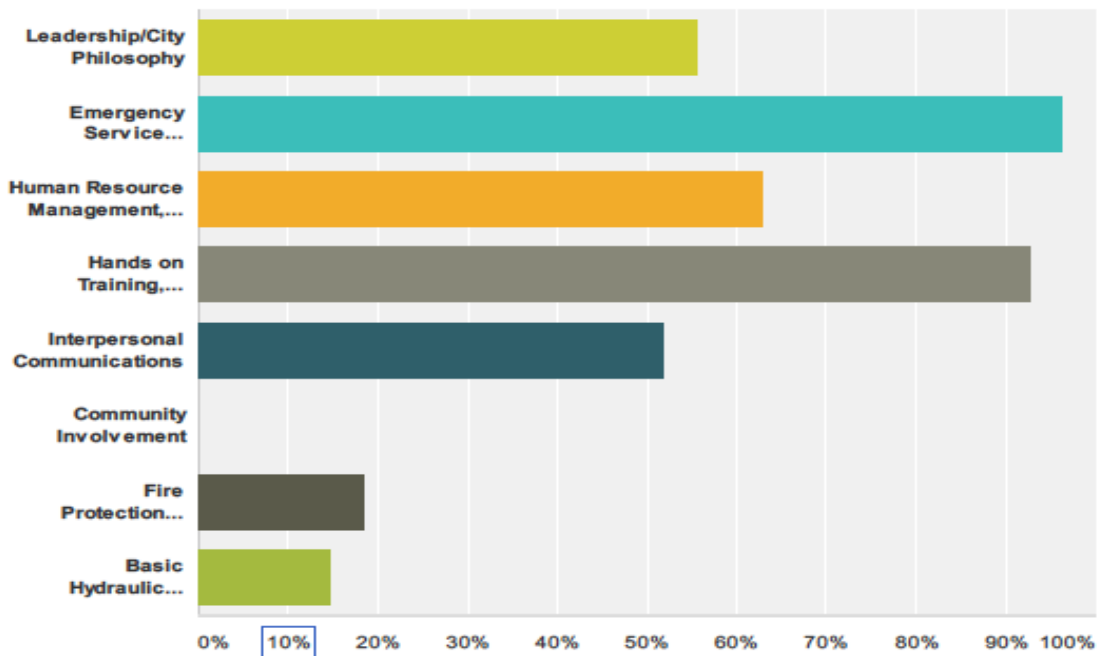
Q6 Who do you feel should sign off and approve a Task Book for the Acting Fire Officer?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



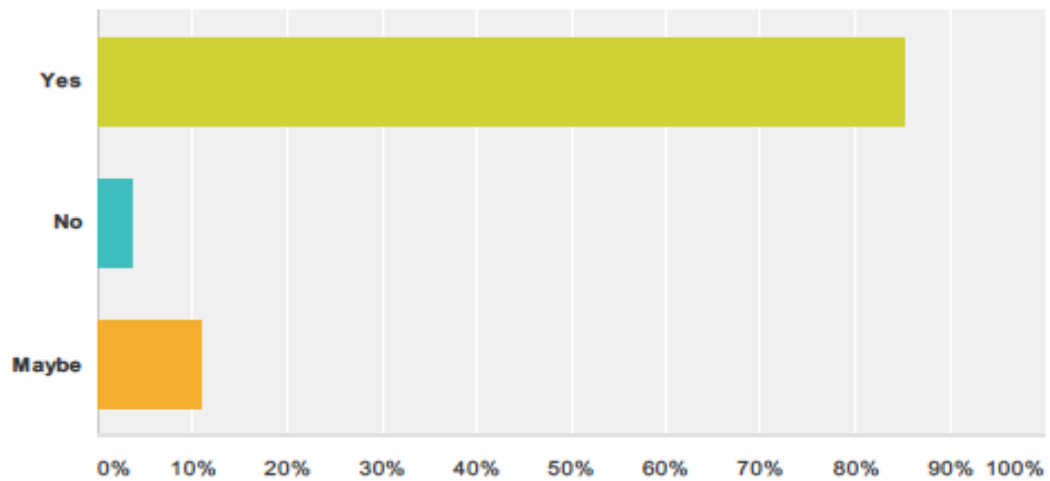
Q7 What are the four most important factors to you in an Acting Officers Development Program.

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



Q8 Do you feel an Acting Fire Officer Development Program would increase your knowledge, skills , and personnel abilities for your success and the organizations success?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



Appendix C

Questionnaire for Applied Research Program - EFOP, NFA

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program, I am working towards completion of an applied research project titled "Evaluating the Need For a Acting Fire Officer Developing Program". I am asking all Fire Lieutenants to complete eleven multiple-choice questions. Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. My intent is to gather only the results of the questions.

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message. I would appreciate if you could complete the questions by May 29th, 2014.

I appreciate your participation, if you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact me.

David Varney

Battalion Chief

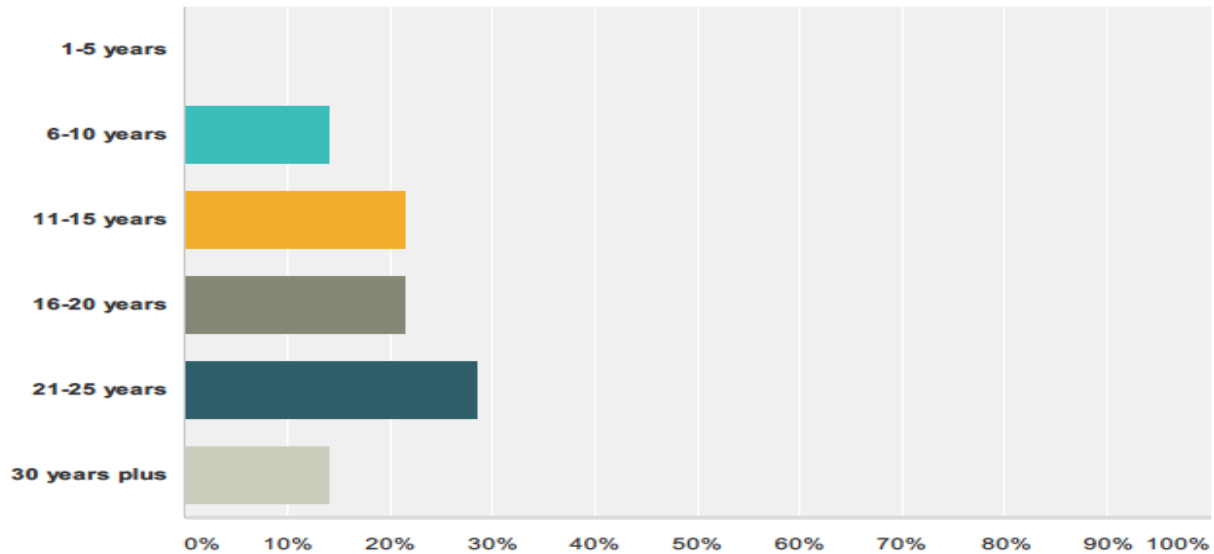
Westminster Fire Department

Appendix D

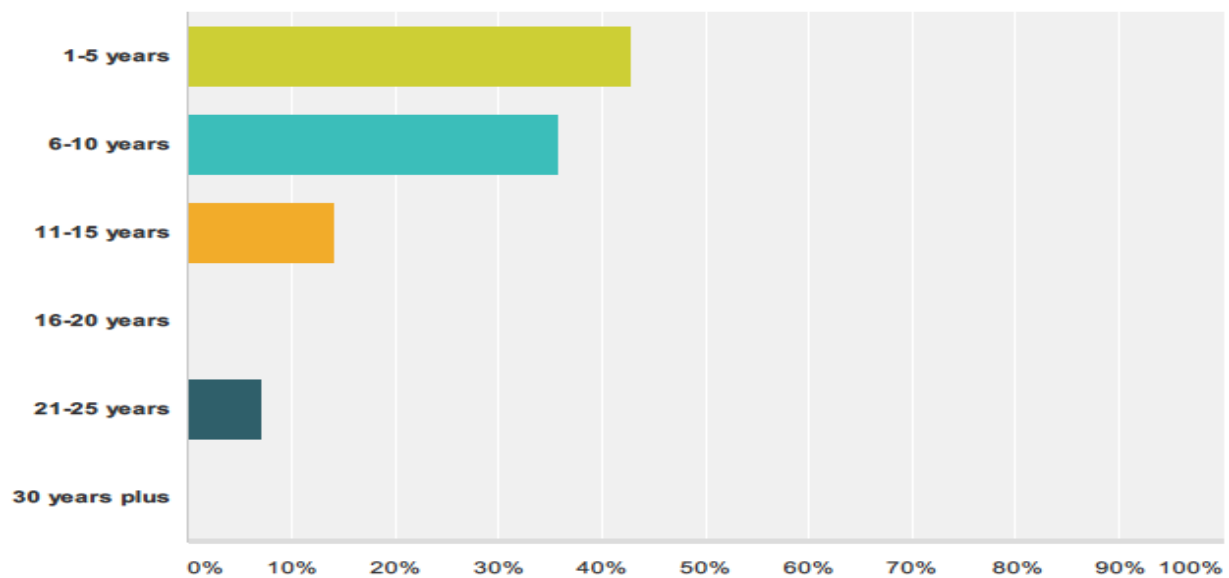
Results from the Fire Lieutenant Questionnaire via Survey Monkey

Q1 How long have you been employed with the Westminster Fire Department?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0

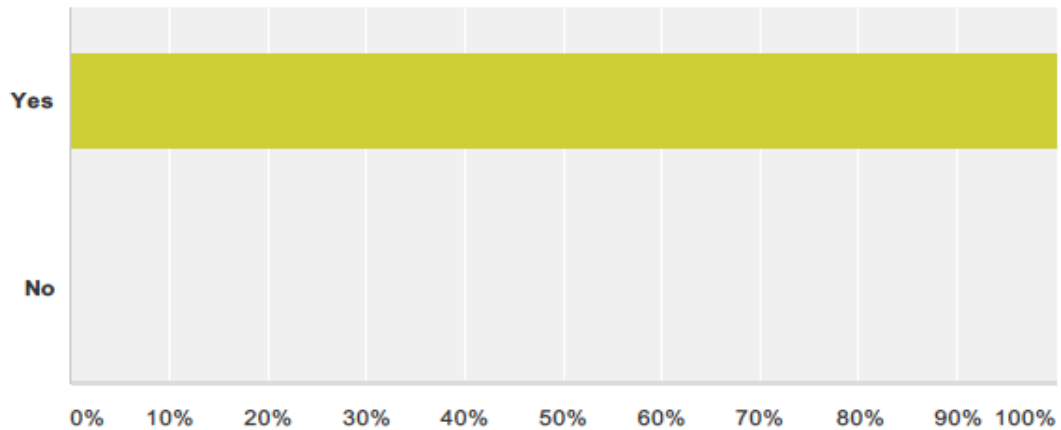
**Q2 How long have you been a Fire Lieutenant for the Westminster Fire Department?**

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



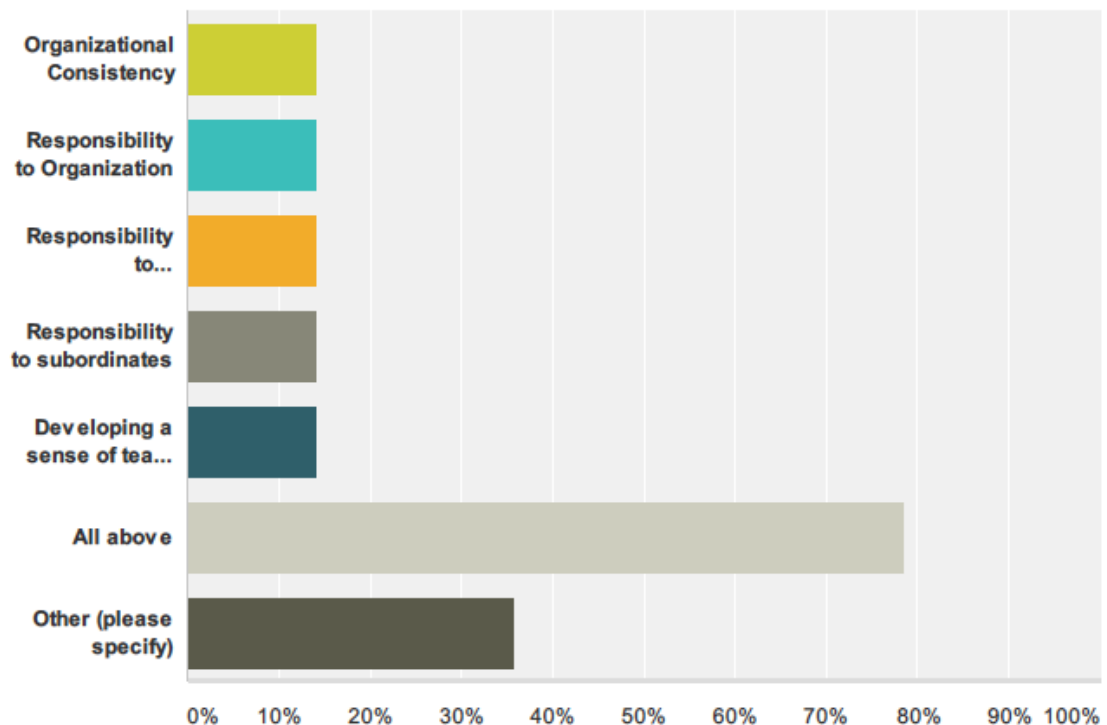
Q3 Is there a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



Q4 If question 3 is answered "yes", choose the following answers to why is it important for an Acting Officer Development Program?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Organizational Consistency	14.29%	2
Responsibility to Organization	14.29%	2
Responsibility to community/citizens	14.29%	2
Responsibility to subordinates	14.29%	2
Developing a sense of team unity and pride	14.29%	2
All above	78.57%	11
Other (please specify)	35.71%	5
Total Respondents: 14		

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Responsibility to the individual in that role.	5/31/2014 7:09 PM
2	Succession planning	5/30/2014 7:47 AM
3	Train our members toward successful leadership	5/28/2014 12:23 PM
4	To ensure that a person is trained and fully able to serve in the acting officer capacity	5/18/2014 2:43 PM
5	Sharing of past successes, failures, wisdom, etc.	5/18/2014 1:33 PM

Q5

Export ▾

If question 3 is answered 'no', please
explain why?

Answered: 0 Skipped: 14

● Responses (0)

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Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

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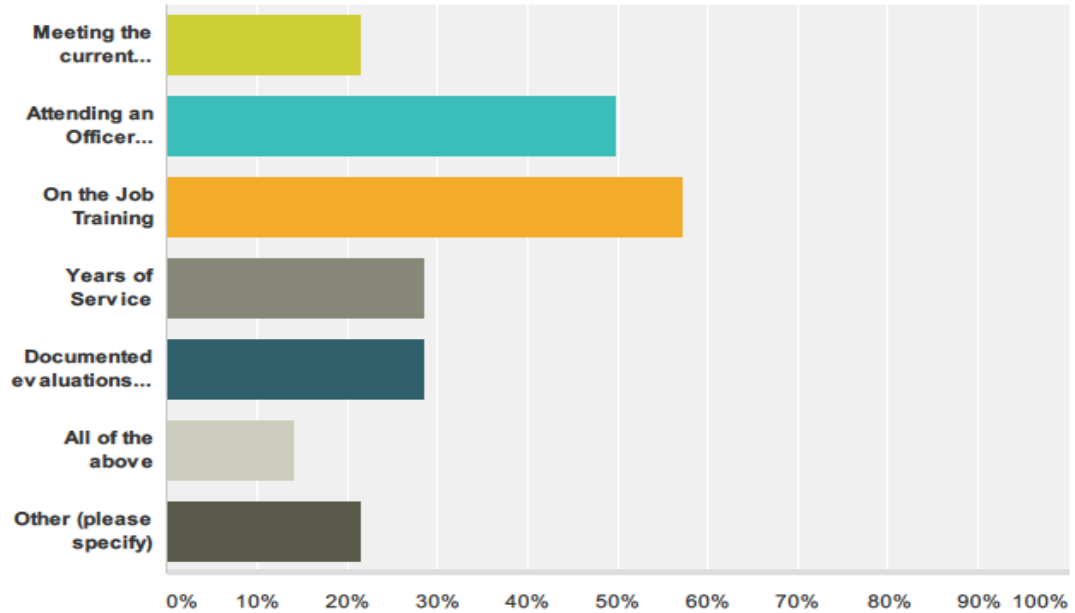
Search responses



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Q6 What should be the minimum requirements for an Acting Fire Officer based on the following options?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0

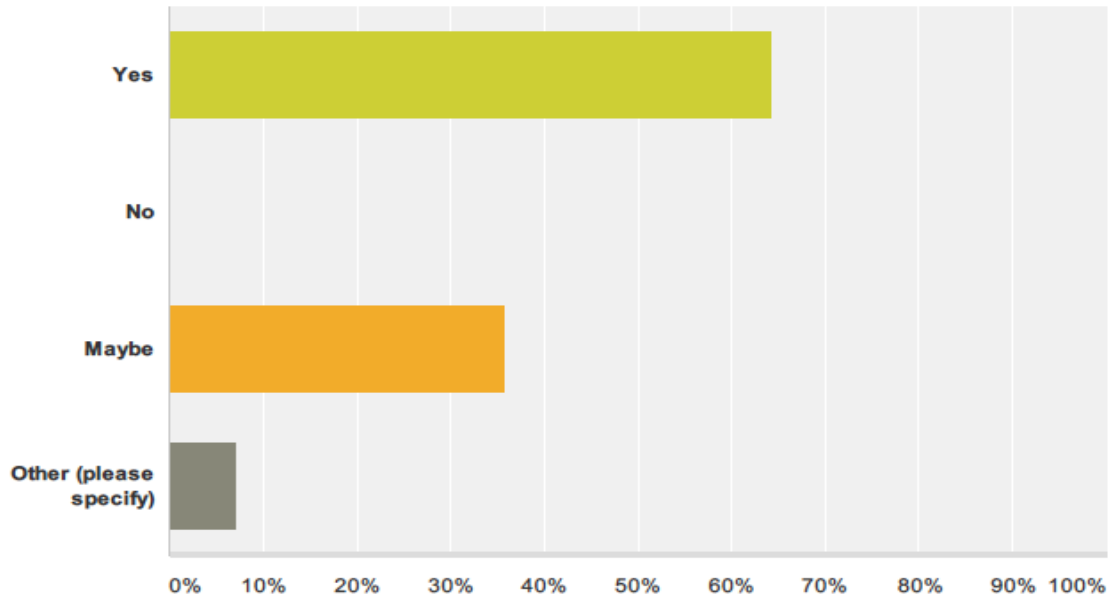


Answer Choices	Responses
Meeting the current Professional Development Guidelines of Fire Lieutenant	21.43% 3
Attending an Officer Development Academy	50.00% 7
On the Job Training	57.14% 8
Years of Service	28.57% 4
Documented evaluations post Officer Development Academy of critical task / administrative forms	28.57% 4
All of the above	14.29% 2
Other (please specify)	21.43% 3
Total Respondents: 14	

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Dedication to the organization	5/30/2014 7:49 AM
2	Use a taskbook system such as NWCG requires	5/19/2014 7:54 PM
3	completion of a "packet" where the candidate would show proficiency in fireground decision making, personnel policy understanding, etc.	5/18/2014 2:45 PM

Q7 Would a task book consisting of job specific check off sheets benefit the Acting Fire Officer?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0

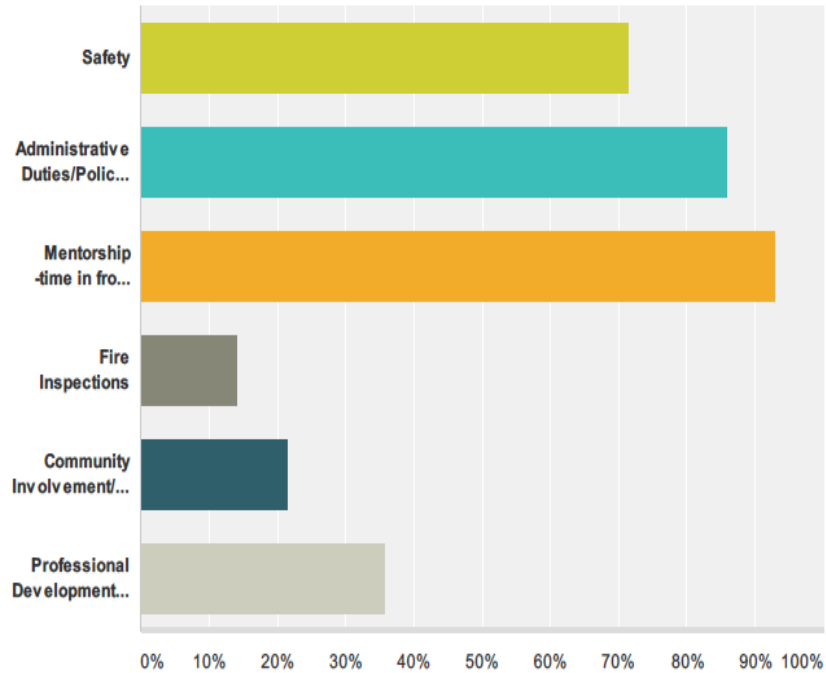


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	64.29%	9
No	0.00%	0
Maybe	35.71%	5
Other (please specify)	7.14%	1
Total Respondents: 14		

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Ifsta Fire Officer I with a proctor	5/26/2014 5:48 AM

Q8 From the options below, choose the most important elements that could be assigned in an Acting Officer task book?

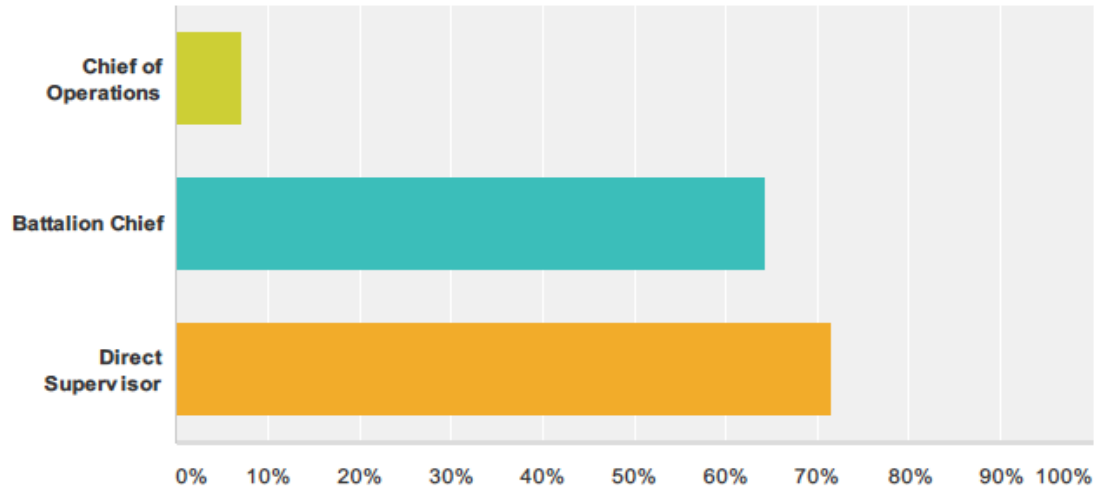
Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Safety	71.43%	10
Administrative Duties/Policies & Procedures/SOG's	85.71%	12
Mentorship -time in front seat	92.86%	13
Fire Inspections	14.29%	2
Community Involvement/ City Relations	21.43%	3
Professional Development Requirements	35.71%	5
Total Respondents: 14		

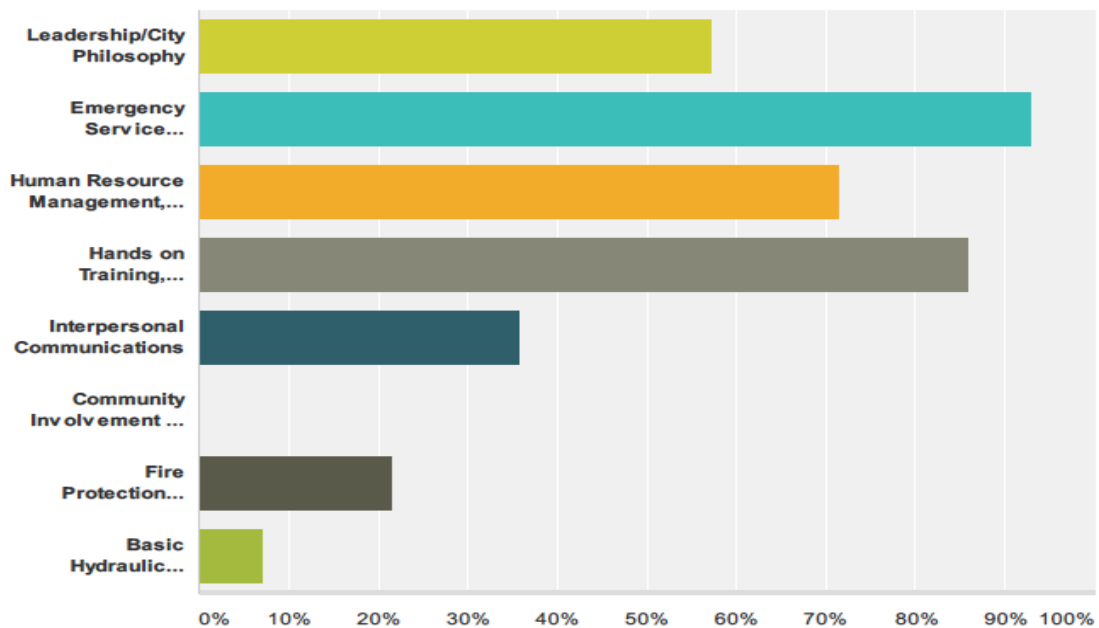
Q9 Who should sign off and approve a task book for the Acting Fire Officer?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



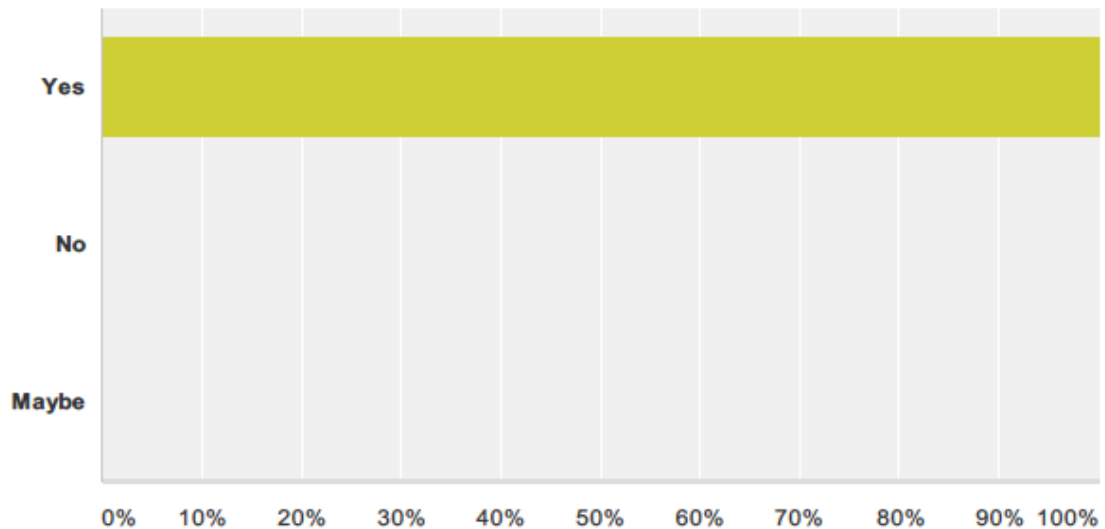
Q10 From the choices below what are the four most important factors for an Acting Officer Development Program?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



Q11 In your opinion, would an Acting Fire Officer Development Program increase the knowledge, skills, and personnel abilities for their success and the organizations success?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



Appendix E

Questionnaire for Applied Research Program - EFOP, NFA

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program, I am working towards completion of an applied research project titled “Evaluating the Need For a Acting Fire Officer Developing Program”. I am asking all Fire Captains to complete eleven multiple-choice questions. Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. My intent is to gather only the results of the questions.

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message. I would appreciate if you could complete the questions by May 29th, 2014.

I appreciate your participation, if you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact me.

David Varney

Battalion Chief

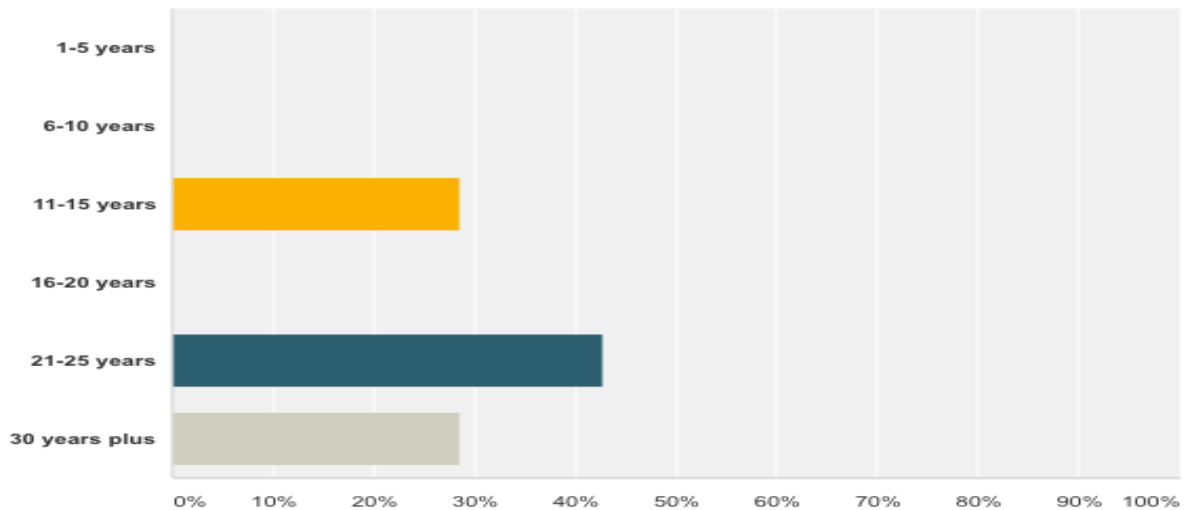
Westminster Fire Department

Appendix F

Results from the Fire Captain Questionnaire of the Westminster Fire Department via Monkey Survey

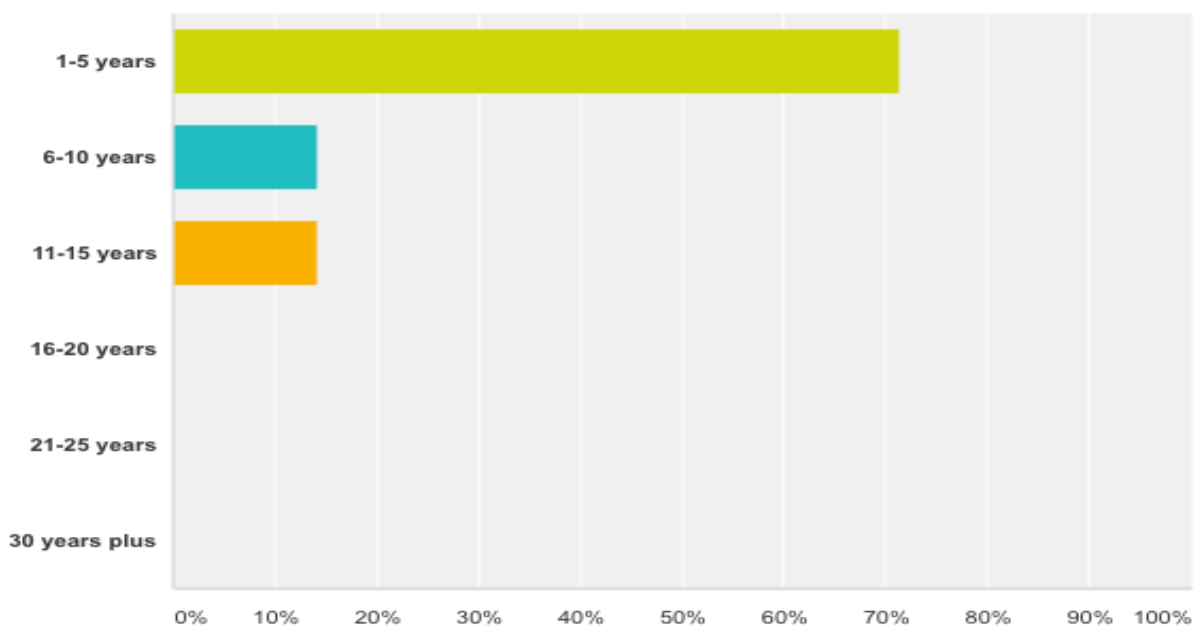
How long have you been employed with the Westminster Fire Department?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



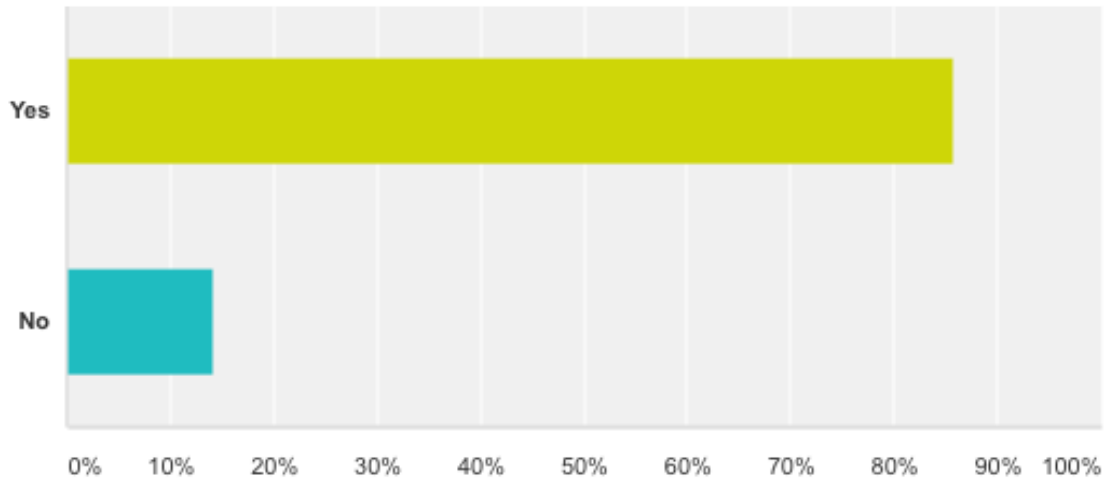
How long have you been a Fire Captain for the Westminster Fire Department?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



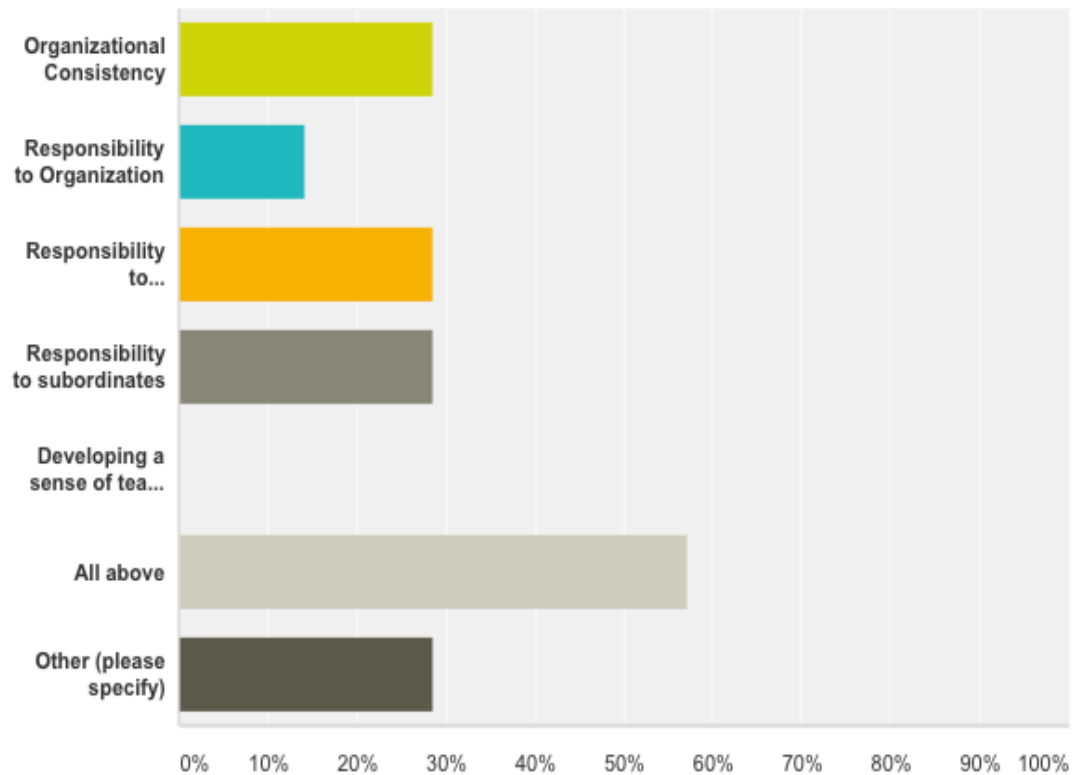
Is there a need for an Acting Fire Officer Developing Program?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



If question 3 is answered "yes", choose the following answers to why is it important for an Acting Officer Development Program?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Organizational Consistency	28.57% 2
Responsibility to Organization	14.29% 1
Responsibility to community/citizens	28.57% 2
Responsibility to subordinates	28.57% 2
Developing a sense of team unity and pride	0.00% 0
All above	57.14% 4
Other (please specify) Responses	28.57% 2
Total Respondents: 7	

If question 3 is answered 'no", please explain why?

Answered: 2 Skipped: 5

Responses (2)

Text Analysis

My Categories

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Search responses

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We currently have an Officer Development Program. I feel with some tweaking (adding some emphasis on ICS) this program would become the standard to become an Acting Officer.

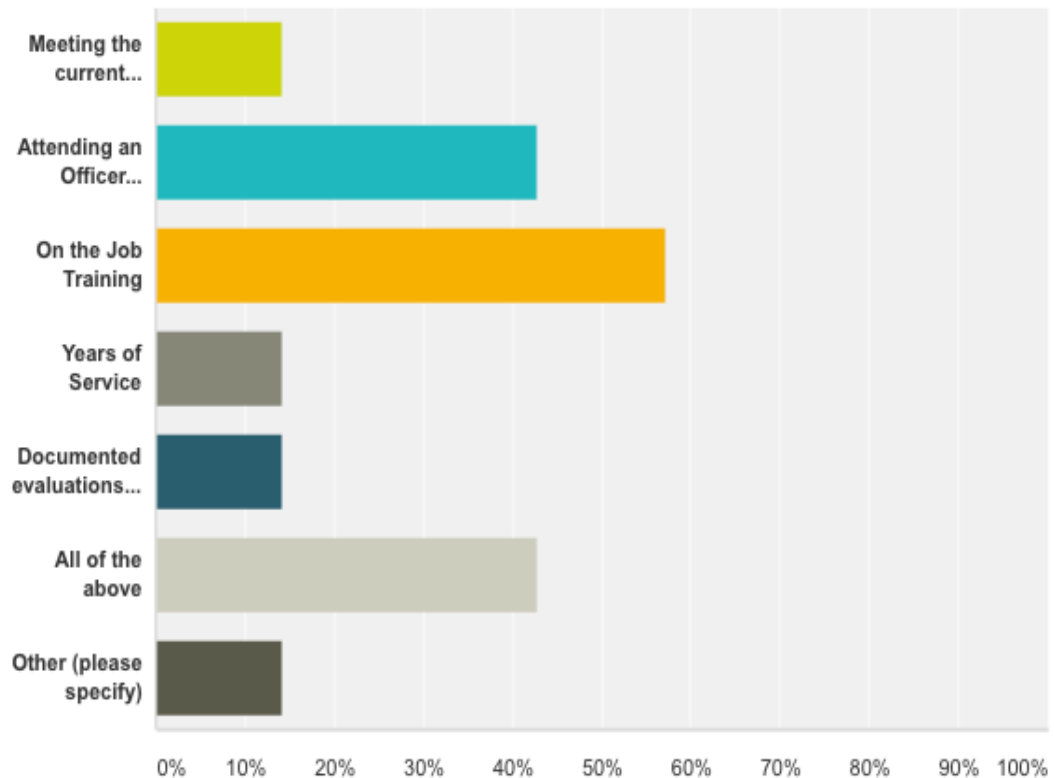
5/20/2014 4:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

N/A

5/19/2014 2:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

What should be the minimum requirements for an Acting Fire Officer based on the following options?

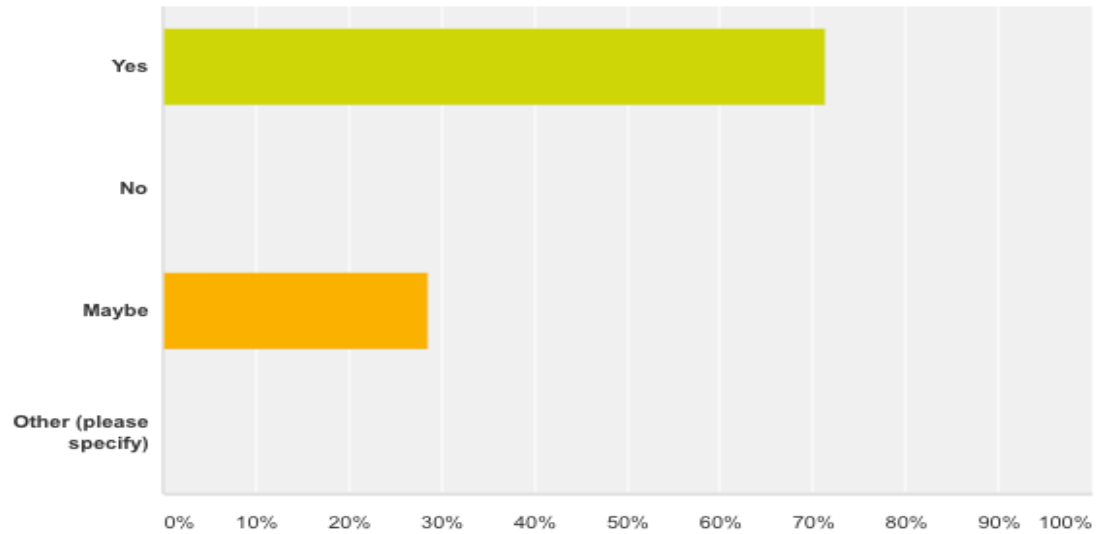
Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Meeting the current Professional Development Guidelines of Fire Lieutenant	14.29% 1
Attending an Officer Development Academy	42.86% 3
On the Job Training	57.14% 4
Years of Service	14.29% 1
Documented evaluations post Officer Development Academy of critical task / administrative forms	14.29% 1
All of the above	42.86% 3
Other (please specify) Responses	14.29% 1
Total Respondents: 7	

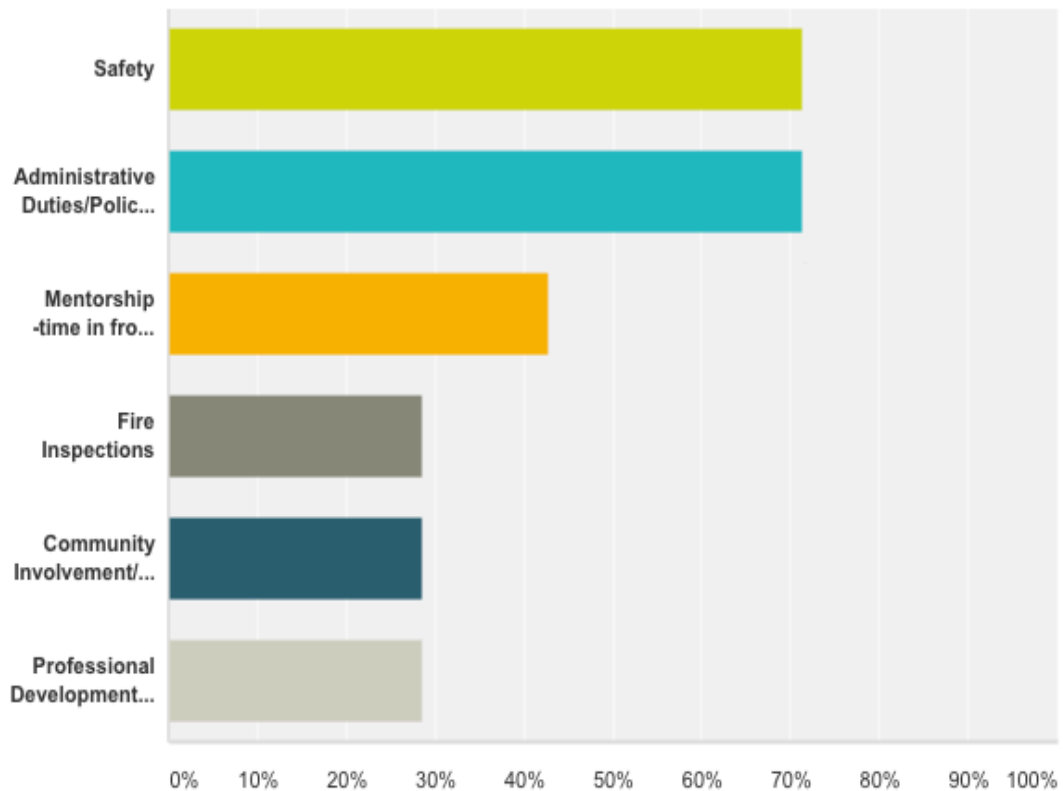
**Would a task book consisting of job
specific check off sheets benefit the Acting
Fire Officer?**

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



From the options below, choose the most important elements that could be assigned in an Acting Officer task book?

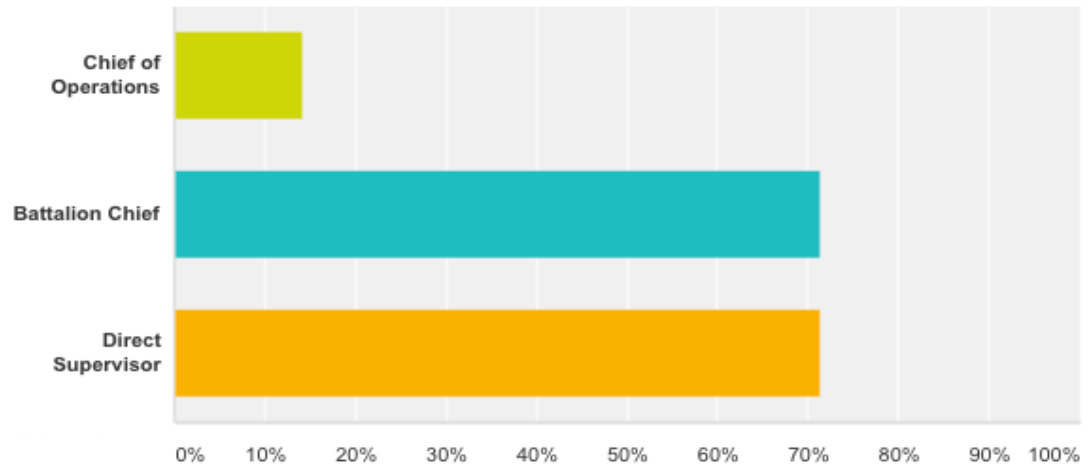
Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
▼ Safety	71.43%	5
▼ Administrative Duties/Policies & Procedures/SOG's	71.43%	5
▼ Mentorship -time in front seat	42.86%	3
▼ Fire Inspections	28.57%	2
▼ Community Involvement/ City Relations	28.57%	2
▼ Professional Development Requirements	28.57%	2
Total Respondents: 7		

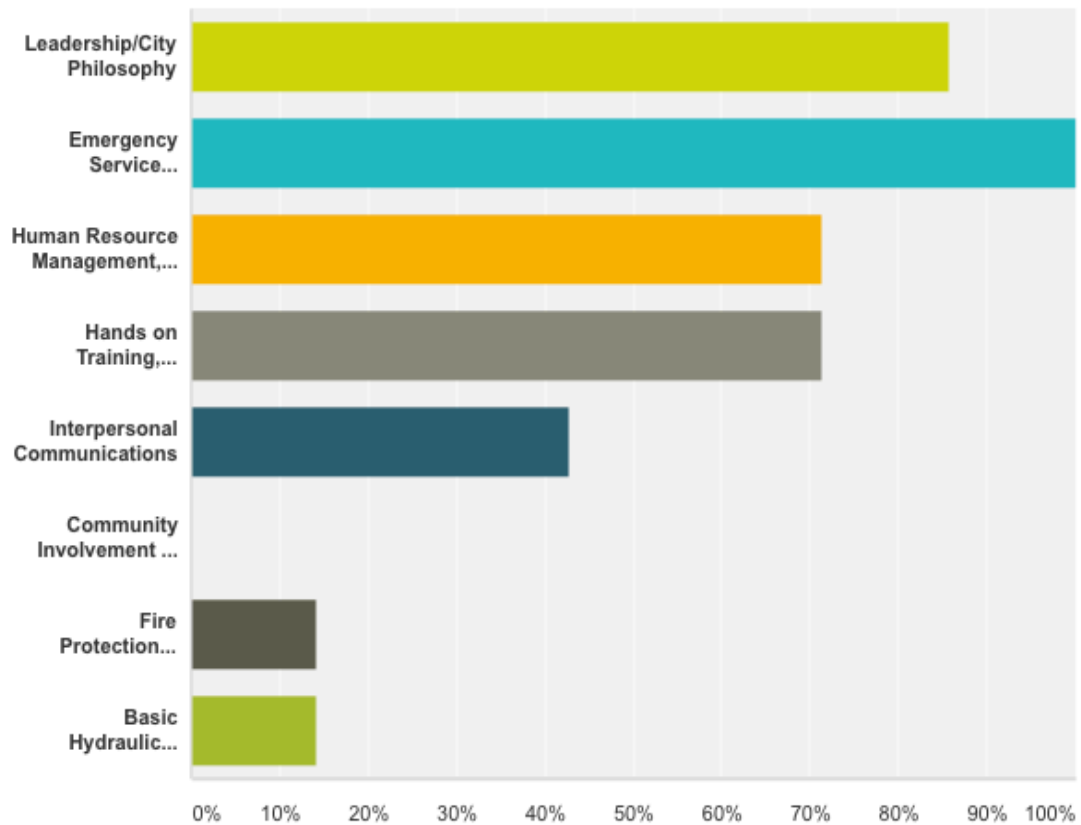
Who should sign off and approve a task book for the Acting Fire Officer?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



From the choices below what are the four most important factors for an Acting Officer Development Program?

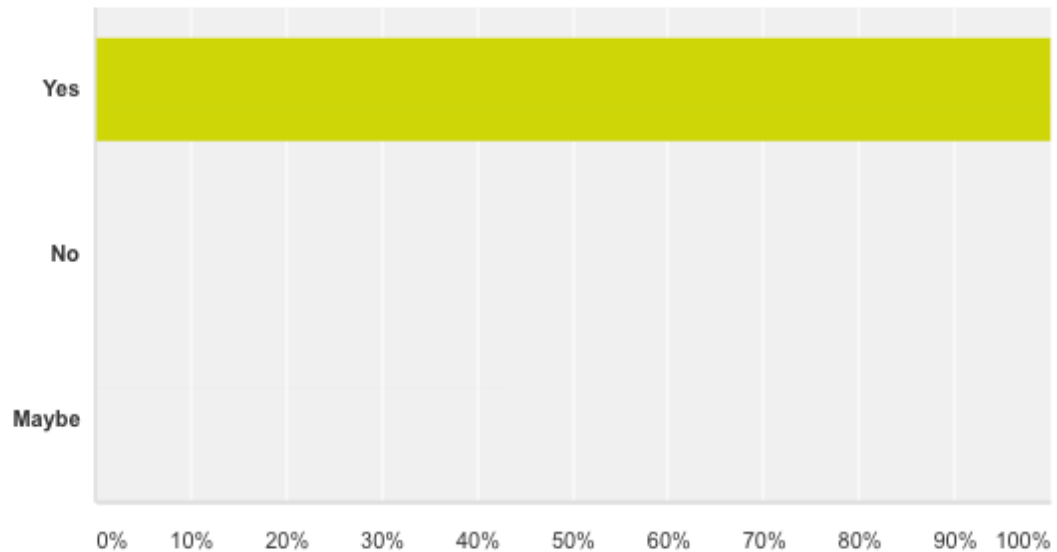
Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Leadership/City Philosophy	85.71% 6
Emergency Service Delivery, content - ICS, Strategies and Tactics	100.00% 7
Human Resource Management, content - appraisals, personnel issues, SOG's, Policy's and Procedures	71.43% 5
Hands on Training, content - coaching by Fire Officer/Battalion Chief	71.43% 5
Interpersonal Communications	42.86% 3
Community Involvement - expectation of interaction with the citizens/community	0.00% 0
Fire Protection systems	14.29% 1
Basic Hydraulic Principles	14.29% 1
Total Respondents: 7	

In your opinion, would an Acting Fire Officer Development Program increase the knowledge, skills, and personnel abilities for their success and the organizations success?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



Appendix G

Interview for Applied Research Program – EFOP, EDC

Interview for Applied Research Program – Battalion Chiefs

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program, I am working towards completion of an applied research project titled “Evaluating the Need For a Acting Fire Officer Developing Program”. I am asking all Battalion Chiefs to complete 5 interview questions. Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. My intent is to gather information based on the questions I will ask you. I would appreciate if I could meet with you by the end of June 30th, 2014.

I appreciate your assistance,

David Varney

Battalion Chief

Westminster Fire Department

Appendix H

Interview Questions for Battalion Chiefs of the Westminster Fire Department

1. Do you feel there is a need for an Acting Officer Program?
2. If you believe there should be an Acting Officer Program, who should manage the program?
3. Of the following four choices on a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being the highest score, rank in order the most important choices for an Acting Officer Program: human resource management, hands-on training / coaching, emergency service delivery, leadership / philosophy.
4. Would a task book consisting of job specific check off sheets benefit the Acting Fire Officer?
5. In your opinion, would an Acting Fire Officer Development Program increase the knowledge, skills, and personnel abilities, for their success and the organizations success?